



Rundle booked in Barking thriller

IAN RUNDLE

Barking 2, Wycombe Wanderers 3

LADY LUCK, so often ignoring Wycombe Wanderers this season, couldn't have chosen a more opportune moment to favour them than in the all important 84th minute at Vicarage Road on Saturday writes **Mike Whitesman**.

For Wycombe's winner should, without any shadow of doubt, have been disallowed. Only referee Cooper managed not to spot an obvious handling offence by Larry Pritchard, shortly before Johnny Hutchinson dispatched the ball goalwards.

Despite frantic home appeals, Mr. Cooper stuck to his guns and pointed to the centre circle, leaving Barking to curse and Wycombe to beam at a decision which finally swung a see-saw game, the points, and possibly the Isthmian championship.

But then there was reasonable doubt too about several of the goals, most prominently Wycombe's second, again netted by Hutchinson and this time appearing suspiciously offside.

It all served to add uncertainty to 90 unpredictable minutes played out on a terrible, bumpy pitch. Under the conditions, both sides turned in highly laudable displays, however, each having an awful lot to say for themselves.

Wycombe, oozing a fresh fighting spirit, certainly didn't deserve to lose. Ted Powell's midfield mastery was an outstanding feature.

Barking, the only Isthmians to take both points from Loakes Park this season, went out to claim a rare "double" over the Bucks men. And that possibility grew when, after just 13 minutes, they wrong footed the Wycombe defence to go one up. A long throw by Mel Jones, backheaded by Neil Fox, was tapped home by ex-Rainham Town player, Alan Kiff.

Yet the Wanderers roared back on terms inside ten minutes with a dashing movement began, continued and finished by Tony Horseman. "Bodger", standing at right half, sent a long through ball up the touchline for Keith Searle, who moved swiftly before crossing into the Barking "box". Larry Pritchard, off balance, could make nothing of it, but 'keeper Hadlow needed to block both Horseman and Hutchinson, and then had no chance of preventing Horseman from putting it in at the third attempt.

Six minutes later, with Barking countering strongly, Mr. Cooper harshly booked Ian Rundle for a wild tackle on Walters.

Into injury time, Wycombe's woodwork quivered twice in a split second under shots from Walters and Bradley.

But Wanderers carried the lead into the interval, Barking expecting Mr. Cooper to rule Hutchinson offside, were too slow to react as the winger rushed the ball upfield to score.

Neville Fox, a former international who began the season with Hendon before returning to Barking, made it 2-2 in the 56th minute, after Page had headed the ball at Wycombe's net in deceptive fashion.

Iain MacLean, limping after receiving a kick on his heel early in the second half, was replaced by Vince Faulkner for the final quarter, and almost immediately Wycombe enjoyed another lucky let-off when Walters rapped a post.

Hutchinson's controversial winning goal, one of the most vitally important of the season, came six minutes from the final whistle, and made for uproar both on and off field.

It's not often the breaks have gone Wycombe's way this season. But then, like they say—all's fair in love, war and soccer when there's a title at stake.

BARKING: W. Hadlow; M. Jones, A. Butcher, M. Bulman, D. Boyton, G. Bradley, E. Moore, R. Page, N. Fox, A. Kiff, C. Walters. Sub. C. Long (not used).

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: J. Maskell; K. Blunt, I. MacLean (V. Faulkner, 68 mins.), E. Powell, J. Delaney, I. Rundle, A. Horseman, B. Baker, K. Searle, L. Pritchard, J. Hutchinson.

Referee: Mr. A. H. Cooper.

Half-time: 1-2. Goalscorers:

Barking — Kiff (13), Fox (56).

Wycombe — Horseman (23), Hutchinson 2 (1st half injury time, 84).